The Birth of a Name

Trachell, the name given to me at birth, made me a great speller at a young age. “How do you spell that?” people would ask. “T-R-A-C-H-E-L-L with no e on the end”, was my typical response. As a child, my response was always accompanied with a glowing smile, recognizing that I was smarter than some adults because they couldn’t spell a name as simple as mine. As life continued, my name was both showered with compliments, and butchered with mispronunciations and misspellings. However, I found pride in the uniqueness of my name and to this day take pride in spelling and pronouncing it correctly for others. Therefore, I was shocked the first time my mother called me Jessina Marie.

On the day of my birth, my mother believed that I resembled my great aunt (my grandmother’s sister) named Jessina Marie. Therefore, little Jessina Marie Taylor was now a part of the world. What I later learned as Trachell, was that Jessina Marie died when she was the tender age of 18 and my grandmother believed that naming me after her might jinx me and cause an untimely death. Of course, my mother didn’t believe in superstitions, but the looming fear of what could occur fostered her decision to name me something else. Yet, she had no options. My grandmother then recalled the name Trachell, and to this day she can’t remember where she heard it or where it came from, but it was graciously accepted by my parents and scribed on my birth certificate. From that day forward, I became known as Trachell.

It wasn’t until middle school that I began to question my name. We were given an assignment to discover the origin of our name and I was befuddled at the request. It came from my grandmother and that was all that I knew. I searched in the book of names and never found my name, let alone where it came from. This struck me with a certain sadness because my name had no origin, it didn’t mean anything, and I was bound to fail this assignment if I couldn’t complete it. I spoke with my mother thinking she could help, and she assured me that I could define my name by using qualities attributed to me. This brought on new confidence because what could be easier than describing me. Therefore, Trachell meant smart, shy, talented, and funny. It was too hard to pick one, so I chose to include them all. What can I say? I was a confident little girl and could she really tell me I was wrong. Needless to say, my teacher knew of my difficulty and my assignment wasn’t a failure. I once again loved my name and felt even better knowing that its origin began with me.

Over the years, I have continued the task of spelling and pronouncing my name correctly for those who find it difficult and it still brings a smile to my face to hear that my name is pretty. So, there you have it…I’m Trachell, nicknamed Tra, and affectionately called Jessina Marie (but only by my mother).